

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
OMB-01 SSC-01 CPR-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 COME-00 /072 W  
-----051903 100918Z /20

R 091508Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3244  
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 STOCKHOLM 0964

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SW  
SUBJ: OLA ULLSTEN TAKES OVER AS LIBERAL PARTY LEADER

REF: STOCKHOLM 500

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. IN ITS FOURTH CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP SINCE 1967, THE LIBERAL PARTY UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED 46-YEAR-OLD MINISTER FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AND IMMIGRATION OLA ULLSTEN AS ITS NEW CHAIRMAN. THE ACTION CAME AT A CONFERENCE ON MARCH 4 IN STOCKHOLM WHICH WAS CONVENED AFTER PER AHLMARK'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE WAS RETIRING FROM HIS POSITIONS IN SWEDISH POLITICS, INCLUDING THE LIBERAL PARTY'S LEADERSHIP POST.

2. IN HIS SPEECH TO THE CONFERENCE, AS WELL AS IN HIS INTER-VIEWS WITH THE MEDIA, ULLSTEN ATTEMPTED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE CHANGE IN PERSONALITIES WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE PARTY'S POLITICAL LINE. WHAT ULLSTEN MUST SUCCEED IN, HOWEVER, IN FINDING A ROLE FOR HIS PARTY IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL  
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CONTEXT, WHERE IT IS DRAWN TO THE RIGHT BY THE NEEDS OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY THAT REQUIRE COOPERATION WITH THE TWO OTHER NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES, AND TO THE LEFT WITH BY ITS SELF-IMPOSED NEED TO LIVE UP TO "RADICAL" TRADITIONS OF LIBERALISM AND ITS DESIRE TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS BESETTING THE MATURE WELFARE STATE. AS IF TRYING TO ASSERT CLEAR DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE LIBERALS AND THOSE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE POLITICAL

SPECTRUM TO THEM, ULLSTEN REMINDED THAT "SOCIALISTS", EVEN IN THE MODERATE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PACKAGING, STILL MAINTAIN THE BELIEF THAT THE CENTRAL DECISION-MAKERS KNOW BEST". SIMILARLY, THE MODERATES EVEN UNDER A LIBERAL-MINDED GOVERNMENT'S PATRONAGE, "ARE STILL FEARFUL OF PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS WHICH MAKE TODAY'S SOCIETY DIFFERENT THAN IT BECAME THROUGH THE VERY REFORMS THEY RESISTED YESTERDAY".

3. ULLSTEN'S WILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE WITH POLITICAL FOES AND HIS ADOPTION OF POLITICAL POSITIONS THAT STAND TO HAVE THE LEAST REBUKE FROM OTHER POLITICAL SPOKESMEN HAVE LED MANY TO SPECULATE THAT, SOONER OR LATER, HE WOULD LEAD HIS PARTY INTO A COALITION WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. SUCH A QUESTION WAS PUT DIRECTLY TO ULLSTEN BY TV REPORTERS SHORTLY AFTER HIS ASSUMPTION OF POWER. THE INTERVIEW WAS ESPECIALLY UNCOMFORTABLE FOR ULLSTEN GIVEN THE PRESENCE OF CHRISTER NILSSON, THE PARTY'S YOUTH ORGANIZATION CHAIRMAN, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY STATED HIS LIKEING FOR A LIBERAL-SOCIALIST COALITION. WITHOUT ALLOWING HIMSELF TO BE PINNED DOWN BY DENYING THAT SUCH AN EVENTUALITY COULD NEVER TAKE PLACE, ULLSTEN FELT CONTENT TO REPEAT THAT HIS PARTY INTENDED TO REMAIN IN THE GOVERNMENT AND GO INTO THE 1979 ELECTIONS AS PART OF THE GOVERNMENT COALITION. HE DISMISSED REPORTERS' QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW HE WOULD RESPOND TO A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC "MARRIAGE PROPOSAL" BY STATING THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO TALK ABOUT THEORETICAL POSSIBILITIES. NILSSON HIMSELF WENT FURTHER IN STATING THAT ON THE BURNING ISSUES

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FACING SWEDEN, THE LIBERALS HAD MORE IN COMMON WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS THAN THEY DID WITH THEIR NON-SOCIALIST PARTNERS, ESPECIALLY THE MODERATES.

4. ON ONE OF THESE "BURNING ISSUES", THE QUESTION OF WAGE-EARNER FUNDS, ULLSTEN MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE DID NOT SHARE THE VIEWS OF HIS MODERATE PARTY COALITION PARTNERS THAT SUCH FUNDS WERE INCONCEIVABLE AND IRRECONCILABLE WITH A FREE MARKET ECONOMY. ACCORDING TO ULLSTEN, SUCH FUNDS COULD BE A WAY OF REDUCING THE CONCENTRATION OF CAPITAL IN THE HANDS OF A FEW OWNERS IN SWEDEN; HOWEVER, HE DEMANDED IN HIS PARTY'S NAME THAT SUCH FUNDS STRENGTHEN A DECENTRALIZED ECONOMY. AT ANY RATE, IN SHARP CONTRAST TO THE MODERATES, ULLSTEN CALLED FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE IDEA.

5. ULLSTEN ALSO BELIEVES THAT A COMPROMISE IS POSSIBLE IN THE NUCLEAR ENERGY QUESTION, ESPECIALLY IN THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CONDITIONS ACT IS TO BE INTERPRETED. ULLSTEN DOES NOT SEE A REFERENDUM ON THE ISSUE AS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE AND EXPECTS THE GOVERNMENT TO SIT OUT ITS MANDATE PERIOD THROUGH THE 1979 ELECTIONS. END UNCLASSIFIED

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AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 STOCKHOLM 0964

BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL:

6. CHANGES IN STYLE CERTAINLY WILL BE NOTED. AS DAGENS NYHETER OBSERVED, AHLMARK'S CHARACTERISTIC STATEMENT THAT "A PARTY THAT DARES NOT MAKE ENEMIES WILL NEVER MAKE ANY FRIENDS" WOULD HARDLY BE SUBSCRIBED TO BY ULLSTEN. ULLSTEN IS KNOWN AS A "MAN WITHOUT ENEMIES" WHO HAS A WAY OF EVOKING SYMPATHY AND RESPECT BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE HIS OWN PARTY CIRCLES. WHILE LESS BRILLIANT THAN HIS PREDECESSOR, HE IS ALSO SEEN TO BE LESS BELLICOSE AND PROVOCATIVE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ONSET OF THIS INVETERATE COMPROMISER AS NEW LIBERAL PARTY LEADER MAY CONFRONT THE PARTY WITH THE NEED TO ONCE AGAIN FIND ITS OWN IDENTITY IN THE MYRIAD OF SWEDISH POLITICS. THE FACT THAT A DYNAMIC LEADER SUCH AS AHLMARK ALSO OCCUPIED THE SENSITIVE AND HIGHLY VISIBLE POST OF LABOR MINISTER ALSO MEANT THAT HE COULD PERSONIFY THE PARTY'S PHILOSOPHY AND APPEAL TO THE VOTERS THROUGH HIS CONTRIBUTIONS IN LIMITING THE UNEMPLOYMENT IMPACT OF SWEDEN'S DETERIORATED ECONOMIC POSITION. SUCH WILL NOT BE THE CASE WITH ULLSTEN, WHO WILL GIVE UP HIS PORTFOLIO AS IMMIGRATION MINISTER TO AHLMARK'S SUCCESSOR AS LABOR MINISTER,  
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ROLF WIRTEN. ALTHOUGH ULLSTEN'S RETENTION OF THE POST OF  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE WILL PROVIDE HIM WITH THE  
OPPORTUNITY HE SEEKS TO PERSONIFY A "LIBERAL" APPROACH IN THE  
FIELD OF ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS, THE EFFECT ON THE  
AVERAGE SWEDE WILL BE MUCH LESS THAN IN THE MORE IMMEDIATE AREA  
OF LABOR MARKET POLICY. END CONFIDENTIAL.  
KENNEDY-MINOTT

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## Message Attributes

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